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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001054

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS, PRM/ANE; LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY; NSC FOR
MILLARD; GENEVA FOR PLYNCH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2014

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#) [BH](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: SEVEN BHUTANESE REFUGEES ARRESTED AS
SUSPECTED MAOISTS; OTHERS FLEE

REF: KATHMANDU 594

Classified By: DCM Robert K. Boggs for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: According to various media reports and UNHCR sources, seven Bhutanese refugees, including one minor, were arrested in the Beldangi Refugee Camp on suspicion of being connected to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). One of the refugees arrested reportedly was found in possession of Maoist literature, a home-made pistol and ammunition. Two of the seven, including the minor, were subsequently released. UNHCR is attempting to assure due process for the arrested refugees. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). (U) According to media reports, three Bhutanese refugees were arrested in Jhapa District on June 2 and another four the following day on suspicion of being Maoists. All of the arrestees were from the Beldangi Bhutanese Refugee Camp. According to the reports, the principal suspect was Chandra Bahadur Prasain, who was found in possession of a home-made pistol, ammunition and Maoist literature. Two of the suspects, Parbati Khadka and Januka Tiwari, have subsequently been released. As a result of the arrests, the reports conclude, upwards of 100 other "suspected Maoists" have fled the camp.

[13](#). (C) UNHCR Protection Officer Giulia Ricciarelli (please protect) confirmed the arrests through her staff in Beldangi Camp. According to Ricciarelli's sources, Nepali Armed Police (APF) personnel, in the presence of the camp secretary (a refugee representative) and the camp supervisor (a GON official), made the arrests in broad daylight. Nepali security forces later confirmed the arrests, and the release of two of the suspects, to UNHCR. UNHCR is attempting to assure due process for the arrested refugees.

[14](#). (C) Ricciarelli stated that the Beldangi Camp rumor mill had long whispered that Nepali security forces suspected anywhere from 30 to 200 refugees of being connected with the Maoists. (NOTE: Nepali security forces withdrew from all of the refugee camps after a Maoist attack on a nearby police post in September 2003. Since March 2004, APF has had a presence on the outskirts of the Beldangi Camp. There is no security presence at the other camps. END NOTE.) Thus, the arrests did not come as a surprise to UNHCR, nor did the stories of other refugees fleeing the camp. Ricciarelli lamented that UNHCR had been warning that conditions in all of the refugee camps, particularly due to growing frustration with the stalled repatriation process, made the camps ripe for increasing militancy (Reftel). Ricciarelli indicated that Beldangi Camp was considered the "most politicized" of the camps. She added, however, that UNHCR was not aware of any Maoist forced recruitment in the camps.

[15](#). (C) COMMENT: This is a most unfortunate, but perhaps not unexpected, development. While the arrests might argue for increasing the pace of verification and a beginning of immediate repatriation, these events could equally be used by the Bhutanese to justify further delay. Moreover, any real or suspected connection between the Bhutanese refugee population and the Maoists only serves to increase the myriad risks to an already vulnerable population. The sole positives were the style with which the arrests were carried out, in broad daylight and under the auspices of refugee and GON observers, and the speed with which those no longer under suspicion were released. END COMMENT.
BOGUE